

## EROS AND THE THREE SHEPHERDS OF *COMUS*

by *Stewart A. Baker*

The court masque creates a dramatic setting where symbol and discourse are translated directly into action. In Milton's *Ludlow Mask*, the quest for order without restraint, and for freedom without self-destructive license, is directly enacted through symbolic oppositions, such as the wandering of the Lady and her brothers, the guiding presence of the Attendant Spirit, the disorderly revels of Comus's rout, and the orderly dances of shepherds and courtiers. This translation of symbol into action culminates near the end of the *Mask* in the merging of the actors and spectators. The Lady and her brothers are presented to their parents, the spectators are "taken out" to join the dancing, and the barriers between the worlds of art and actuality dissolve.<sup>1</sup> This climactic process, in effect, also translates the actual into the symbolic by incorporating the audience in the world of the *Mask*. The translation of symbol into action has made possible the union of the actual world with the informing order of art. Such a process has been implicit, of course, in our dual awareness of the masquers themselves, whom we know to be both dramatic characters and the young children of the Earl of Bridgewater.

In the same way, the masque makes possible the direct translation of language into action. Thyrsis's song invokes the presence of Sabrina, and Sabrina appears. Sabrina's song invokes the symbolic powers of chastity that will free the Lady, and the Lady is released from her stony fetters. These songs are, literally, conjurations that actualize desire through language. In the *Ludlow Mask*, moreover, this power to actualize desire through language is specifically identified with the role of the shepherd. Through the complex opposition of the three principal shepherds, I believe, Milton is exploring the role of the poet, of poetry, and of language itself.

This exploration of the poet's role centers on the Attendant Spirit. His role as agent of Providence subsumes the poet's role, through which in his prologue he creates the symbolic setting of the *Mask* and relates the invented myth of Comus. A moment later he has transformed himself into the shepherd Thyrsis. In his shepherd's role Thyrsis also subsumes the roles of poet and spiritual guide. But in his role, poetry becomes not only the process of creation through language, but also of transformation or re-

---

Mr. Baker is Associate Professor of English at Rice University.

creation. His name recalls the Orphic *thyrsis*, the rod that embodies the Orphic power to control and transform Nature.<sup>2</sup> The poetry of Thyrsis, we are told, possesses this Orphic power (494-499). We see this in action: When the Attendant Spirit has transformed himself into a shepherd, his poetry recreates the pastoral setting. The earth that had been a "pinfold," a corral for sheep, becomes the rich pastoral domains of the Earl of Bridgewater. In this new context, pastoral images usually assume positive values, as opposed to the negative connotations of the "pinfold." This pastoral order implicitly underlies the stable order of society threatened by Comus.

Thyrsis also expresses his Orphic role through his management of the plot, bringing good out of evil through deliberate fictions. These fictions include his tale of his rural minstrelsy interrupted by Comus's rout (540-550); his story of the swain Meliboeus who taught him about the powers of Sabrina (825-858); and that other tall tale of the shepherd lad who gave him the herb haemony in gratitude for the Orphic ecstasy of his song (618-647). Although Thyrsis acts only through speaking, these fictions shape the action of the *Mask*. The Orphic role of Thyrsis thus employs the poet's fictions to bring moral order out of the disorder created by Comus. This moral order proceeds, in effect, from the imagined reality that Thyrsis, through language, enacts into actuality. Pastoral's symbolic correspondence to the real world is liberating rather than restrictive. It predicates a free play of the shepherd's Orphic imagination that permits him to reaffirm the order of nature and society, and to assert the latent order of providence.

The Lady and her brothers belong to the order of society; they are courtiers. They lack the shepherd's Orphic sympathy with nature; nature is for them instead a test of their values. This testing reveals them not as poets, but as speculative philosophers. Hence their statements, unlike those of Thyrsis, find only partial, and often ironic, actualization. The Lady's echo song, with its dangerous invocation of the nymph Echo, and its allusions to love-lorn nightingale and the egocentric Narcissus, does not attract the help the Lady seeks. Instead it attracts Comus (230-276). The song, in effect, suggests the negative potential of the Lady's virginity, which coincides with the more obvious threat posed by Comus. Similarly, the debate between the brothers (331-479) and the Lady's debate with Comus are verbalizations of contrary desires that seek, but do not achieve, confirmatory actualization. The confident Platonism of the Elder Brother and the common-sense fears of the Younger Brother remain speculations tangential to the event. Comus's appeal to use nature's bounty and the Lady's enraptured invocation of the angel of Chastity dramatize states of desire whose actualization is frustrated by rejection or paralysis.

The language of the Lady and her brothers is limited by the social roles, by their youth, and in a larger sense, by their humanity. Comus, however, like Thyrsis, takes on the roles of shepherd and artist of transformations.

His power of transformation, of course, is a Satanic parody, and it consistently frustrates its own ends. He not only brings evil out of good; he also perverts his own purposes, chief among which is the pursuit of pleasure. Comus, as the audience knows, is not the faithful, courteous shepherd the Lady at first takes him to be (271-330). He contrives to blear the eyes of the Lady alone (164-166); the audience continues to see him in his proper person. He is, in fact, a courtier. He has both a palace of pleasures and a rout, or retinue, who wear the "glistening apparel" of courtiers (Stage direction, 92). His temptation of the Lady begins with talk about the loyalty and courtesy of shepherds, but it ends as an elaborate parody of a courtly seduction couched in the elegant rhetoric of cavalier poetry (737-755).

Court and pastoral, society and nature, are thus the counters of the ironic transformations enacted by Comus. When he announces his own transformation into a shepherd, he redefines his rout as a herd (153). His rout, moreover, display this transformed quality, having the heads of beasts and the apparel of courtiers. Comus's perversion of the social order perverts the order of nature; it implicitly challenges the order of providence. His misuse of nature's bounty perverts the shepherd's enjoyment of pleasure and meditative *otium*. Comus's faculty for transformation, enacted through a poetry of perverse celebration and persuasion, thus allows the roles of the false shepherd and false courtier to collapse into one role, that of the artist who perverts nature to the uses of evil.

Seen in moral terms, Thyrsis and Comus present a clear opposition. This opposition, however, also embraces a number of points at which their roles complement one another. Thyrsis, the Orphic shepherd, is actually the Attendant Spirit, Jove's courtier, just as Comus, the false shepherd, is also a courtier. Both interpret the order of nature and are able to effect transformations within it. In effect, Comus actualizes the negative potential of the role of Thyrsis. In the *Ludlow Mask*, pastoral predicates a realm of discourse where opposites may become complementary, and this process of complementation makes possible a complex series of transformations and transvaluations. Court and pastoral provide metaphorical reflections of each other, and each reflection embodies both its negative and its positive potential. The disorder of society is actualized through Comus in the disorder of nature. But the renewal of the order of nature, through the agency of Thyrsis, is able to renew the order of society.

This system of transformation and transvaluation, moreover, insists upon its character as process. The *Ludlow Mask* explores the possibility of resolution while continuing to propose alternatives. The Lady is returned safely to the festive court of her parents, but Comus and his rout continue to revel in the perplexed paths of the drear wood. More importantly, the Attendant Spirit's epilogue insists that the Lady's rescue from Comus and the reaffirmation of the values of chastity and faith are only complementary

phases in an ongoing process. A careful consideration of the epilogue further reveals, I think, the increasingly sophisticated poetic that Milton is evolving through the *Ludlow Mask*.

When the music and dancing are done, the Attendant Spirit puts off his shepherd's clothes and prepares to reascend to the broad fields of the sky. Only now do we learn that those regions, unlike the Lady's doctrine of Chastity, do not attempt a Platonic transcendence of nature. Instead they embrace the gardens of Hesperus, a superterrestrial paradise where the Graces and the Hours celebrate the eternal round of generation and process:

There I suck the liquid air  
All amidst the Garden fair  
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three  
That sing about the golden tree.  
Along the crisped shades and bow'rs  
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring.  
The Graces and the rosy-bosom'd Hours  
Thither all their bounties bring,  
That there eternal Summer dwells . . .  
(980-989)

Platonist critics have wished to identify these gardens with Plato's "True Earth," which lies beyond the Ocean.<sup>3</sup> Their resemblance to Spenser's Garden of Adonis, however, is more immediate and meaningful.<sup>4</sup> They anticipate, not Milton's heaven, which can be expressed only through metaphor, but the garden of *Paradise Lost*, where imagination is confirmed by the experience of the senses.

The Lady and her Elder Brother have emphasized a Platonic doctrine of transcendental chastity. These gardens of Hesperus, I think, should be seen as restatement and transvaluation of that concept. As a matter of detail, the gardens restate and transvalue many earlier themes and images. The Attendant Spirit, who sucks their liquid air, compresses sensuous experiences into drinking, transvaluing the pleasures of Comus's poisoned cup. The gardens are named for the star which, Comus has said, "bids the Shepherd fold" (93). That star, as we know, is called either Hesperus or Venus. As Hesperus, it represents security and peace to the shepherd; as Venus its rising marks the time appropriate for the revels of Comus. Things in nature, as the Lady has told us, should be valued by their source and their use (762-779).<sup>5</sup>

The gardens of Hesperus, in effect, transform earlier images of dangerous pleasure and Ludlow's images of social pleasure into images of perfected pleasure. The perplexed paths of the drear wood where the Lady is beguiled by Comus become Hesperus's cedarn alleys with their balmy odors. Comus's place is taken by "The spruce and jocund Spring," who is clearly male (in place of Botticelli's female), and who appears as one of the masculine generative forces underlying nature, whereas Comus advocates the non-

procreative consumption of nature's bounty (710-755). The revels of Spring transvalue Comus's "Joy and Feast, / Midnight shout and revelry, / Tipsy dance and jollity" (102-104). Similarly, the songs of the Lady, Thyrsis, and Sabrina, along with the fertility dances of the shepherds and the lighter trippings of the courtiers, have been transformed into the singing and dancing of Hesperus and his daughters. The pastoral images evoked earlier by Thyrsis reappear as the crisped shades and bowers of Hesperus. The Severn with its pure water, identified before with the paradox of Sabrina's chastity and the natural fertility of her streams, is metamorphosed into Iris's humid rainbow, joining earth and heaven, matter and spirit. The golden tree at the center of the dance suggests for us the "vegetable gold" of the Tree of Life in Eden. The Graces, to whom Ficino assigns the values of emanation, conversion, and return, embody the process by which God's creative power expresses itself in nature; here they bring their bounties and join the Hours, symbols of time and process, in the eternal round of creation.<sup>6</sup>

The gardens of Hesperus thus identify true pleasure with the process of generation and with the cosmic cycle that underlies it. This transvaluation of the themes of the *Mask* culminates, finally, in Milton's re-creations of the myth of Venus and Adonis, and the myth of Cupid and Psyche. The Attendant Spirit warns us that our understanding of these myths is a test of ourselves. "List mortals," he cautions us, "if your ears be true," and proceeds to describe

Beds of *Hyacinth* and *Roses*  
 Where young *Adonis* oft reposes,  
 Waxing well of his deep wound  
 In slumber soft, and on the ground  
 Sadly sits th' *Assyrian* Queen;  
 But far above in spangled sheen  
 Celestial *Cupid* her fam'd son advanc't,  
 Holds his dear *Psyche* sweet entranc't  
 After her wand'ring labors long;  
 Till free consent the gods among  
 Make her his eternal Bride;  
 And from her fair unspotted side  
 Two blissful twins are to be born,  
 Youth and Joy, so *Jove* hath sworn.

(998-1012)

This passage was not used in the performance at Ludlow, where part of the Epilogue had been moved to the Prologue.<sup>7</sup> There must have been several reasons for this, not the least of which is that the thematic transvaluations that take place in the epilogue are too complex and undramatic for the court performance of a masque. They become appropriate only in the printed version, where the *Mask* stands to survive primarily by its success as a pastoral poem.

Most critics have agreed with Woodhouse in recognizing Venus and Adonis as sponsors of natural procreativity. Cupid and Psyche, on the other hand, have been assigned to a variety of places on a Platonic ladder that ascends from nature to an ideal of contemplative love.<sup>8</sup> This variety of views results, I think, from the complexity of Milton's myth and his use of his sources. Spenser's Psyche is a more earthbound figure. She is Amoret's instructress in "true feminitee," and her allegorical home is the Garden of Adonis, the seminary of created things. Milton, however, places Psyche with Cupid "Far above" Venus and Adonis. Cupid, moreover, is called "Celestial." Their transferral from the Garden of Adonis to a place far above the gardens of Hesperus may suggest a Platonic ascent, or at least some mediatorial function, a middle state where nature and grace are integrated in the human experience. But the act of transferral also reveals, I think, the imaginative logic which, for Milton, invests the myth with new meaning.

The myth of Cupid and Psyche, embodied in Milton's descriptive image, implicitly restates important elements of the myth of Venus and Adonis. That is, it transfers these elements into its own context of meaning. Both myths restate the meaning of the Lady's experience within their respective contexts of relevance. Both, for instance, involve a past threat of violation and loss, similar to the dangers the Lady has survived. Milton's treatment of both myths is, moreover, marked by a tone of anticipation which again helps to define their relevance to the experience of the Lady; their incompleteness refers directly to the world of process in which she is involved. Adonis, who had ignored the appeals of Venus, has suffered the consequences in his encounter with a wild boar, and he is still "Waxing well of his deep wound." Procreation, the consummation of pleasure in nature, is clearly delayed. Psyche, at the end of her labors, has regained the husband she had lost, but she remains "entranc't" in his arms. As with the Lady's quest in the wood and her subsequent imprisonment, there has been a price to be paid. The anticipated bliss of the mythical lovers, moreover, clearly predicts the rewards of the Lady's victory over sensual folly.

Thus Milton's use of these two myths is not a simple resolution or thematic closure. Instead, the awareness of past trials, present paralysis, and future pleasure, implicit in both the myths and in the Lady's story, maintains our sense of process and change. The temporal element in Milton's treatment of the myths contradicts, I think, the assumption that this is a familiar Platonic ladder of ascent and static correspondences. The experiences of the Lady, Adonis, and Psyche all remain in states of becoming. Each of them, within his own context, is in the process of recapitulating the experiences of the others. In this way, each serves as an "infolding" (to use Wind's phrase) of the "unfolded" themes of the *Mask*.<sup>9</sup> In neo-Platonic systems of mythography such as Ficino's and Pico's, these "infolded" parts are understood to restate implicitly the "unfolded" whole.<sup>10</sup> Like typographic

logical figures, neo-Platonic figures thus acquire, through progressive "in-foldings" and "unfoldings," a temporal dimension which permits the symbol to re-express its meanings through multiple phases of relevance.

The critics of *Comus*, relying on a footnote in the Spenser *Variorum*, have assumed that the myth of Cupid and Psyche must be read Platonically.<sup>11</sup> An examination of the Renaissance commentaries on Apuleius, however, reveals that they provided Milton with a significant choice.

It is true, on the one hand, that the marriage of Cupid and Psyche had been regarded by ancient neo-Platonists and early Christians as the soul's marriage to God. This is the version implied in Hellenistic art and in Martianus Capella.<sup>12</sup> Boccaccio takes his cue from Martianus; he further explains that Cupid's features, which Psyche had been forbidden to see, symbolize the divine form, the extrinsic works of God. Psyche's lack of faith and her pride tempt her to violate this prohibition and thus she loses the faculty of contemplation and is separated from her divine spouse. Her quest to regain him is a purgation by which she recovers the *bonum contemplationis* and is perpetually joined to it. Her child Voluptas, according to Boccaccio, is the eternal pleasure and happiness that love gives birth to.<sup>13</sup>

Boccaccio's Platonizing interpretation of Cupid and Psyche was certainly available to Milton. Its usefulness is limited in the Ludlow *Mask*, however, because it does not serve to interpret the experience of the Lady. The Lady confronts vice in the form of Comus, whereas the Platonic Psyche discovers the "divine form" in the person of Cupid. The Platonic Psyche gains, through purgations, the faculty of contemplation. The Lady, on the other hand, has asserted with some earnestness her present ability to see the ideal form of chastity.

Moreover, Boccaccio's reading does not appear in the standard Renaissance editions of Apuleius. The commentaries, instead, are dominated by the work of the Paduan humanist Filippo Beroaldo, whose interpretation of the myth, I think, is immediately pertinent to the experience of Milton's Lady.

Beroaldo begins with a summary from Fulgentius Planciades, the fourth-century Christian mythographer.<sup>14</sup> Psyche, of course, is the soul. Her two sisters, who incite her to discover the identity of her nocturnal lover, Fulgentius tells us, are Free Will and the Flesh. Venus, who is Lust, envies Psyche and sends Cupid to destroy her. But since Cupid, or Desire, may be the desire for either good or evil, Cupid is drawn to love Psyche, the soul, and is joined to her. This is a key concept, I think, because it predicates a form of desire compatible with innocence. Cupid warns Psyche, however, never to seek to see his face, which would bring her to the knowledge of the idle pleasures (*delectamenta*) of desire. Thus Psyche's case, as Fulgentius reminds his Christian readers, was similar to Adam's, who did not sense the shame of his nakedness until he had eaten of the tree of concupiscence.



However, Psyche's sisters Flesh and Free Will insist upon knowing the pleasures of Desire, and they incite her to discover Cupid's features by the light of her lamp as he lies asleep. By uncovering the lamp, Fulgentius asserts, Psyche reveals the flame of desire hidden in her own heart. Immediately she loves Cupid's features and in the same instant she is spotted (*maculata*) by the oil of her lamp, because Desire is always burning. (In Apuleius, Cupid is burned by the oil of the lamp, and Psyche is pricked by an arrow in Cupid's quiver.) Thus, Fulgentius concludes, Desire brands its spot on the sinner's flesh and she is driven out to undergo her trials in the world. Beroaldo, in paraphrasing Fulgentius, significantly omits the word "sinner" (*peccatrix*).

Fulgentius had ended here, but Beroaldo goes on to interpret the reunion of the lovers. He recalls Martianus's statement that they receive all the blessings of the gods. Moreover, they give birth to the child Voluptas "because from the desire and delight of the soul pleasure is generated, which the greatest of the philosophers reckon as the highest good."<sup>15</sup>

The nature of the *summum bonum*, however, is a point of debate throughout the Renaissance. While the Platonists insist upon the primacy of spiritual love, there is constant agitation for a more secular point of view. The rehabilitation of Epicurus, especially, beginning as early as Ficino's *De voluptate*, and finding dynamic expression in More's *Utopia*, in the "Epicureus" of Erasmus, in Rabelais, and in Shakespeare, increasingly seeks sanctions both for physical pleasure and for the transvalued expression of intellectual experience as *voluptas*.<sup>16</sup> A parallel movement is the humanist and Puritan argument for the pleasures of marriage.<sup>17</sup>

Beroaldo refers us for knowledge of the *summum bonum* to Aristotle, who, he says with unusual vagueness, has written copiously about it. He also refers us to his recently published commentary on Cicero's *Tusculan Questions*.<sup>18</sup> That commentary, in fact, draws upon each of the ancient schools, but its discussion of Epicurus's calculus of pleasures is remarkably full.<sup>19</sup> In regard to Cupid and Psyche, however, Beroaldo has more definite notions about the nature of the *summum bonum*.

He has just been married to a girl named Camilla Paleoti, Beroaldo tells us. She is a lawyer's daughter, a mature twenty-two, neither too handsome nor too ugly, and she is gifted with the miracle of virginal modesty. The pleasures of Cupid and Psyche are much on the mind of Camilla's scholarly young husband. "May the gods," he apostrophizes, "grant that this marriage will be happy, blessed, and good-fortuned for us, and that pleasure may take its birth from it. For if omens are not empty promises, there is no doubt that we have the full enjoyment of a harmonious union rife with pleasure."<sup>20</sup> Beroaldo's celebration of his marriage continues for two full folio pages. If there were any doubt of his attitude, moreover, Beroaldo has also preserved an *Oratio nuptialis* from later years. Employing many of the



same phrases used to celebrate his own marriage, he eulogizes a friend's marriage in terms that approach Milton's celebration of the wedded love of Adam and Eve.<sup>21</sup>

Fulgentius's gloss on Cupid and Psyche, together with Beroaldo's conclusions and the model of Spenser provide, I think, direct suggestions for Milton's treatment of both Psyche and the Lady. The theme of the soul's quest, its temptation and triumph, is emphatic in Milton's tale. The Lady, carelessly left alone by her young brothers, is exposed to Comus and the temptation of sensual pleasure, much as Psyche is abandoned to Cupid by her parents, and prompted by her sisters to learn his identity. Comus appears to the Lady at first disguised as a shepherd; Cupid refuses to allow Psyche to know his identity. Importantly, the audience sees Comus as his proper self, but his magic has dimmed the Lady's vision. She is brought then to Comus's palace of pleasure, as Psyche is taken to Cupid's.<sup>22</sup> When the Lady's vision clears, however, she immediately rejects Comus, a rejection predicated upon her discovery of his true nature. Apuleius's Psyche, on the other hand, is burned by the oil of her own desire, according to Fulgentius. The Lady remains innocent but not unharmed; she is not free from Comus's physical power over her. Instead she is held, according to Sabrina's unfortunate image, by a "marble venom'd seat / Smeared with gums of glutinous heat" (917).

The Lady's experience, in effect, resembles Eve's dream which the toad Satan pours like poison into her sleeping ear. Eve awakens physically discomposed and troubled with remorse. She is absolved by Adam, who tells her that "Evil into the mind of God or Man / May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave / No spot or blame behind" (*Paradise Lost* V. 117-119). The Lady, like Eve, has gained immediate knowledge of evil and has been physically affected by it. Like Psyche she has, in Fulgentius's interpretation, uncovered the form of *cupiditas*, represented here by Comus's sterile lust. Hers is, in fact, one of those implicit dramas of discovery and expanding awareness that recur in Milton's later poetry in increasingly complex form.<sup>23</sup>

Milton, however, implicitly insists upon the innocence of this knowledge that is gained through confrontations with evil. There is no question of the Lady's spiritual integrity, although she is physically paralyzed by Comus; and Milton's Psyche awaits her marriage to Cupid with "fair unspotted side." In this context, "unspotted" is easily understood to mean "physically pure." There is no doubt, however, of the physical purity in the case of the Lady. Hence the "unspotted side" of Milton's Psyche should refer to her freedom, and the Lady's freedom, from emotional guilt. Apuleius's Psyche, on the other hand, was spotted, *maculata*, Fulgentius asserts, by the oil of her lamp, the expression of her desire. Milton, in effect, has allowed his Psyche and the Lady the same knowledge that Apuleius's Psyche has gained; but Milton has removed, as Adam will from Eve, the taint of guilt.

Eve must shed tears of remorse, of course; the Lady remains "entranc't" until she is freed by Sabrina. Milton's Psyche, likewise, must recuperate from her labors. But in spite of this, both Psyche and the Lady enjoy knowledge with innocence, founded upon the integrity of the self.

Although Milton's plot is partly shaped to suit the age and abilities of the Egerton children, one is also tempted to see an oblique relation between the Lady's brothers and Psyche's two sisters as Fulgentius has Platonized them. The brothers, like Psyche's sisters, are responsible for exposing their sister to the knowledge of *cupiditas*. The Elder Brother, with his firm assurance of the freedom of the soul and the magical power of chastity is, in effect, a spokesman for Free Will, the name that Fulgentius assigns to Psyche's elder sister. The Younger Brother, with his commonsense fears for the physical safety of his sister, expresses the anxieties of the Flesh, Psyche's second sister. The Attendant Spirit reveals himself not only as the defender of chastity; in the epilogue he also becomes the spokesman for the true pleasures of love. In fine, in the opposition of Comus and the Attendant Spirit we see the two forms of desire that Fulgentius ascribes to Cupid: one the *cupiditas mali*, which conceives of pleasure in terms of oral consumption and a sterile eroticism; the other, the *cupiditas boni* that here expresses itself through the bonds of sympathy, loyalty, and procreative human love. The reunion of the Lady and her brothers with their parents is a reminder of the bond of family that links nature to society, and the material world to the spiritual world.

The Platonic suggestions of "Celestial Cupid" and his place "far above" Milton's Venus and Adonis are qualified, I think, by the anticipation of Psyche's children Youth and Joy. Milton translates Apuleius's name *Voluptas* as Joy, or *gaudium*, and thus rejects again the frivolous sensual pleasure associated with Comus. But the name Joy incorporates, nevertheless, the jocundity associated with the procreative figures of Hesperus and Spring. This transvaluation of *voluptas*, pleasure, does not renounce the Platonic values; it subsumes them in a union of sensual *voluptas* and spiritual *gaudium*. To reinforce this transvaluation, Milton adds a second child, Youth, who is linked to the youthfulness of Spring, the Lady, and her brothers. The debate over chastity and the use of nature has been reinterpreted, in retrospect, through a celebration of youth, procreation, and true pleasure. True pleasure views the perfect consummation of physical and spiritual love as expressions of each other, and sees that both are reinforced by the natural and social bonds of family.

Such a conclusion, in spite of the indirectness of its presentation, is not surprising for Milton, who in the divorce pamphlets will soon be insisting that the natural pleasures of marriage are inseparable from spiritual compatibility. The Platonic ladder of ascent, if this is what is suggested by the place of Cupid and Psyche "far above," has been trans-

valued as it is in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*. There we begin with a contemplative consideration of the hierarchy of that first marriage. Then we progress, through the increasingly social and physical pleasures of sight, hearing, and taste, conversation and dinner, *upwards* to the mysterious rituals of the nuptial bower. The way up and the way down, as even Satan must learn, may be one and the same.

Thus the shepherd-poet, in his Orphic role, employs a language of transvaluation, the vehicle of an imaginative process by which oppositions are redefined as complementary states of being. The epilogue, in effect, has restated the themes of the *Mask* in a way that resolves oppositions into counter-representations of each other. To reduce these themes to the prose of the moralist, we would introduce a temporal sequence to resolve these oppositions. Chastity would be seen as a precondition of marriage; marriage, in the words of a Puritan divine, is the "ambition of virginity."<sup>24</sup> The Attendant Spirit, however, does not introduce concepts of purpose. The embrace of Cupid and Psyche is an immediate transfiguration of the Lady's state of chastity.

This process of transvaluation expresses itself directly through the genre of *Comus*. Pastoral drama, which in Tasso and Guarini concerns itself with pleasure and constancy, is transformed in the action of *Comus* into a vehicle for defining the values of temperance and faith. The court masque, which evolved from celebrations of fertility and marriage, becomes in the action of *Comus* a means of affirming the values of chastity and restraint. Then in the epilogue, language takes the place of action and restates the values of the Ludlow *Mask* in a way that includes all phases of the transformations through which the genre has progressed. In *Comus*, Milton has already reached a poetics in which genre and language, with apparent autonomy, explore their potential for asserting meaning and for recording the transvaluing process by which meaning, in its multiple phases of relevance, may be asserted. The poetics of the shepherd Thyrsis, I think, evolve immediately into the complex, transfiguring voice of the uncouth swain of *Lycidas*. At a greater distance, the voice of Thyrsis becomes the voice of that other shepherd who, through type and anti-type, plot and counter-plot, asserts eternal providence in *Paradise Lost*.

The Orphic role of Thyrsis finds its counterpoint in the final, cryptic transvaluation of the shepherd's role that Milton achieves in his *Mask*. It is little more than a footnote, but it further illuminates Milton's concept of the possible roles of the pastoral poet. On the title page of the 1637 edition of *Comus*, we hear the voice of Milton's own pastoral persona, whose image was to appear again on the frontispiece of the 1645 edition of the *Poems*.<sup>25</sup> The third shepherd of the Ludlow *Mask*, in tones that differ markedly from those of Thyrsis, is heard quoting a fragment from Virgil's unhappy Corydon: "Eheu quid volui misero mihi! floribus austrum Perditus. . . ." "Alas! What

have I done to my wretched self? I have exposed my flowers to the North Wind, lost soul that I am. . . ." The fragment breaks off with the epithet *Perditus*, which Milton capitalizes as though it were his pastoral signature.

Virgil's Corydon had prepared a bouquet of laurels and myrtles of pastoral love and poetry, for Alexis; he knows that they will be rejected.<sup>26</sup> Like the uncouth swain of *Lycidas*, who begins his lament with the same laurels and myrtles, Corydon senses that he is *rusticus*, that he has wasted his youth and his talents. Like Colin Clout, he feels tainted and frustrated by his failure as a lover and as a poet. He has violated the order of nature and now feels alienated from nature itself. Nature endorses love and fertility, peace and contentment, and Corydon senses only his own sterile futility.

The Renaissance commentators universally remark upon the self-destructiveness of Corydon's infatuation. Philip Melanchthon, for instance, views the Second Eclogue as an exploration of the paradoxes of passion. He first considers the commonplace allegory, which views the poem as Virgil's appeal for Augustus's patronage. "Furthermore," he continues, "this metaphorical complaint is a parable of love, which brings things to such a pass that it proves by many arguments that it should be despised; meanwhile, however, it unworthily inflicts this harm." Melanchthon's collaborator, Stefan Reich, paraphrases: "Eheu: an exclamation containing an amplification of Alexis's great contempt, and this is also an elegant allegory. That is, I have deserved this great evil by my own will, by my own folly, giving occasion to a most violent wind, so that it laid waste all my harvest . . . For he grieves that he has done himself much harm because of this love, and that he had known in his own heart that it was wrong."<sup>27</sup>

Through the voice of Corydon, Milton thus describes his own pastoral persona as *rusticus*, ineffectual, and unsuccessful as both a lover and a poet—an attitude that was to crystallize in the uncouth swain *Lycidas*. The failure of poetry is specifically linked to the failure of love and to a sense of taint. Corydon's ruined flowers point emphatically to the failure of fertility and rational order due to a frustrated and egocentric passion.

The third shepherd of the Ludlow *Mask*, in effect, indicates by his own frustrations the importance of the issues faced by the Lady and her brothers: the right use of nature's bounty, the innocent knowledge and enjoyment of the many phases and forms of love, the meaning of fertility, faith, and true pleasure. While acknowledging these values, the *persona* who speaks from the title page of the 1637 edition reveals himself as a lost shepherd ("Perditus"), or a man endangered, as all men are, by the false pleasures that flow from Comus's poisoned cup.<sup>28</sup> We need not read this as the young Milton's *cri du coeur*, but it should certainly be set against those traditional attempts to describe the young Milton as a man of such chaste and cold conversation that he knew temptation only in literature and in imagination. The author of the Ludlow *Mask* is a complex man, and he clearly sets off the despairing

voice of Corydon against the redemptive role of Thyrsis, the Attendant Spirit, who is also Milton's collaborator, Henry Lawes. Through the role of Thyrsis, Milton provides an antidote to the despair of Corydon by re-creating the Orphic role of the pastoral poet who is able, within the context of the *Ludlow Mask*, to assert the stability of providence and the good inherent in nature, an assertion realized in the *Mask* through the fictions and transvaluations of the shepherd's art.

## NOTES

This paper was presented by invitation to the Renaissance Forum of Yale University and to the Department of Comparative Literature of the Université de Montreal, both in May 1971.

1. John Demaray, *Milton and the Masque Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 28-29. Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp. 102-103.

2. Caroline W. Mayerson, "The Orpheus Image in *Lycidas*," *PMLA*, **64** (1949), 189-207.

3. B. A. Wright, "Above the Smoke and Stir," *TLS*, **44** (August 4, 1945), 367. Also *TLS*, **44** (Oct. 27, 1945), 511. John Arthos, "The Realms of Being in the Epilogue of *Comus*," *MLN*, **86** (1961), 321-324.

4. A. S. P. Woodhouse, "The Argument of Milton's *Comus*," *UTQ*, **11** (1941), 65-71.

5. Cf. *Paradise Regained*, II, 319-322.

6. Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (London, 1958), p. 40. Ficino, *In Plotinum*, I, iii, *Opera*, 2 vols. (Basel, 1576), I, 1559.

7. John S. Diekhoff, "A Maske at Ludlow," in *A Maske at Ludlow: Essays on Milton's Comus* (Cleveland, 1968), pp. 1-16.

8. Woodhouse, "Argument of Milton's *Comus*," pp. 65-71. Sears Jayne, "The Subject of Milton's *Ludlow Mask*," *PMLA*, **74** (1959), 533-543. D. C. Allen, *Mysteriously Meant* (Baltimore, 1970), p. 292. Cleanth Brooks and John E. Hardy, *Poems of Mr. John Milton* (New York, 1961), pp. 228-232. Eric Laguardia, *Nature Redeemed* (The Hague, 1966), p. 145. Michael Macklem, "Love, Nature, and Grace in Milton," *Queen's Quarterly*, **56** (1949), 543. William G. Madsen, "The Idea of Nature in Milton's Poetry," in *Three Studies in the Renaissance* (New Haven, 1958), pp. 216-218. Richard Neuse, "Metamorphosis and Symbolic Action in *Comus*," *ELH*, **34** (1967), 99. Balachandra Rajan, "*Comus*: The Inglorious Likeness," *UTQ*, **37** (1968); reprinted in *The Lofty Rhyme* (London, 1970), pp. 23-44, especially 42-44.

9. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, pp. 74, 87, and especially p. 42. Ficino, *Opera*, I, 890.

10. Ficino, *Opera*, I, 890.

11. *Variorum*, III, 261.

12. Franz Cumont, "Un Sarcophage D'Enfant Trouvé à Beyrouth," *Syria*, **10** (1929), 217-237, especially 231-232. Martianus Capella, *De Nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae*, Liber I.

13. *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium Libri*, ed. Vincenzo Romano, 2 vols. (Bari, 1951), I, 259-261.

14. *Commentarii a Philippo Beroaldo conditi in Asinum Aureum Lucii Apuleii* (Bologna, 1500), ff. 95<sup>r</sup>, 134<sup>r</sup>-135<sup>r</sup>. Cf. *L'Asne Dor ou Les Metamorphoses de Luce Apulee* (Paris, 1502). Fulgentius, *Mythologiarum libri tres* (Basel, 1536), p. 69.

15. Beroaldo, *Commentarii*, f. 134<sup>r</sup>.

16. Edward Surtz, S. J., *The Praise of Pleasure* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), especially pp. 9-11.
17. William and Mallville Haller, "The Puritan Art of Love," *HLQ*, 5 (1942), 235-272. John G. Halkett, *Milton and the Idea of Matrimony* (New Haven, 1970).
18. *Commentarii Quaestionum Tusculanorum* (Bologna, 1496).
19. E.g., ff. 34<sup>r</sup>, 120<sup>r</sup>.
20. *Commentarii . . . in Asinum Aureum*, f. 134<sup>r</sup> - 134<sup>v</sup>.
21. *Johannis Boccatii Fabulosae Historiae Tres de Amore . . . Phillippo Bononiensis interprete. Eiusdem Phillipi Beroaldi Bononiensi oratio Nuptialis Mediolani habita* (Argentorati, 1536).
22. For a modern interpretation of Psyche's "marriage-in-death," see Erich Neumann, *Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine* (New York, 1956). For Eros's pleasure-palace, see also J. J. Bachofen, *Versuch Über die Gräbersymbolik der Alten. Gesammelte Werke* (Basel, 1954), IV, 46.
23. See my article, "Milton's Uncouth Swain," *Milton Studies*, 3 (1971), 35-53.
24. Daniel Rogers, *Matrimoniall Honour* (London, 1642), p. 7. Cited by Haller and Haller, "Puritan Art of Love," pp. 246-247.
25. See Louis L. Martz, "The Rising Poet, 1645," in *The Lyric and Dramatic Milton*, ed. Joseph H. Summers (New York, 1965), pp. 3-33.
26. Eclogue II, 54-73. My translation.
27. *Argumenta sive dispositiones rhetoricae in Eclogas Virgilii* (Görlitz, 1568); no page numbers.
28. Barbara Breasted relates the themes of *Comus* to recent scandals in the Bridgewater family in "Comus and the Castlehaven Scandal," *Milton Studies* 3 (1971), 201-224.